

III. REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-12, 14-21 and 23-31 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 3-4, 12, 14, 21, 23 and 30 have been amended, claims 2, 13 and 22 have been cancelled. Applicants do not acquiesce in the correctness of the rejections and the objection and reserve the right to present specific arguments regarding any rejected claims not specifically addressed. Further, Applicants reserve the right to pursue the full scope of the subject matter of the original claims in a subsequent patent application that claims priority to the instant application. Reconsideration in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Entry of this Amendment is proper under 37 C.F.R. §1.116(b) because the Amendment: (a) places the application in condition for allowance as discussed below; (b) does not raise any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration; and (c) places the application in better form for appeal. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request entry of this Amendment.

In the Office Action, claims 3, 6, 16 and 25 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants gratefully appreciate this indication. By this Amendment, allowable features of claim 3 (including that of intermediate claim 2) have been added to independent claims 1, 12, 21 and 30. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections.

In this Amendment, Applicants have amended claims 1, 12 21 and 30 and cancelled claims 2, 13 and 22 from further consideration in this application. Applicants are not conceding in this application that those claims are not patentable over Ikeda (US Pub. No. 2004/0096092) cited by the Examiner, as the present claim amendments and cancellations are only for facilitating

expeditious prosecution of the allowable subject matter noted by the Examiner. Applicants respectfully reserve the right to pursue these and other claims in one or more continuations and/or divisional patent applications.

In light of the above, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims are in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner require anything further to place the application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

/Spencer K. Warnick/

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